

# *Custer County - Idaho Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan*



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Custer County Idaho  
**WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE FIRE MITIGATION PLAN**

**PROMULGATION OF ADOPTION**

Be it known that the Custer County Idaho Board of County Commissioners do hereby approve the Adoption of the Custer County Idaho Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan and direct its implementation through the creation of a Custer County Wildland/Urban Interface Advisory Committee.

Be it also known that the Board of County Commissioners hereby appoints Mr. Jim Alexander, in his role as Custer County Director of Emergency Services, as the Custer County Wildland/Urban Interface Advisory Committee Chair.

This plan has been developed in the interest of providing fire mitigation protection to populations living in the wildland/urban interface. Through adoption of this Plan, all county and private agencies are requested to develop directives, Standard Operating Procedures, checklists or other supplemental guidance to insure its maximum effectiveness.

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# ***Custer County - Idaho***

## **Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan**

### **Executive Summary And Five-Year Action Plan**

February 12, 2004

## **Executive Summary And Five-Year Action Plan**

The Custer County Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan, hereafter referred to as the Plan, has been assembled to assist Custer County agencies, private landowners, public and private sector organizations, and others interested participants in planning for fires within the wildland/urban interface area. The Plan provides a list of implementing actions that are based on identified hazards and vulnerabilities and designed to assist Custer County in reducing risk and preventing loss from future events. The process of wildland/urban interface fire mitigation is new to the County and many of the mitigation actions will require significant follow-up to ensure effective implementation.

The Plan contains an introduction to wildland/urban interface fire mitigation, the methodology used to develop the mitigation program, the profile of Custer County, a hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment examining hazards that might occur within the county, a section which summarizes the public participation effort, a listing of existing, short and long term implementing actions, a section of cost benefit analysis, plan maintenance and appropriate supporting appendices. The Plan is the result of a collaborative effort between Custer County citizens, federal, state, and local agencies, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. Public participation will continue to play a key role in the implementation of mitigation actions.

A project Interagency Planning Group, assembled on November 20, 2003, has met three times to guide the process of developing the plan. In addition three public meetings were conducted to gather information that has been used to assess the natural hazard and resulting actions outlined further in the body of the Plan. The final meeting of the Group was held on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

The **Four Key Issues** identified by the Group are:

- ☐ **Reduce Fire Loading**
- ☐ **Improve Equipment**
- ☐ **Increase available water storage**
- ☐ **Develop Zoning and Building Codes**

Under direction of the Interagency Planning Group the Custer County Wildland/Urban Fire Mitigation Program has been created to promote public policy designed to protect citizens, critical facilities, infrastructure, private property, and the environment from Wildfires. This mission will be achieved by increasing public awareness, documenting the resources for risk reduction and loss-prevention, and identifying activities to guide the county towards building a safer, more sustainable community.

The Group has established goals that form a foundation upon which Custer County agencies, organizations, and citizens are building upon to begin the mitigation of fire risk within the wildland/urban interface. The goals for the Custer County Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Program are as follows:

### **Protect Life and Property**

- ☐ Implement activities that assist in protecting lives by making homes, businesses, infrastructure, critical facilities, and other property more resistant to losses from wildfire hazards.

- ❑ Reduce losses and repetitive damages for chronic hazard events while promoting insurance coverage for catastrophic hazards.
- ❑ Improve hazard assessment information to make recommendations the creation of County wide zoning and building codes and standards for new developments and encouraging preventative measures for existing development in areas vulnerable to wildfire hazards.

#### **Public Awareness**

- ❑ Develop and implement education and outreach programs to increase public awareness of the risks associated with wildfire hazards.
- ❑ Provide information on tools, partnership opportunities, and funding resources to assist in implementing mitigation actions.

#### **Natural Systems**

- ❑ Balance watershed planning, natural resource management, and land use planning with wildfire mitigation to protect life, property, and the environment.
- ❑ Preserve, rehabilitate, and enhance natural systems to serve wildfire mitigation functions.

#### **Partnerships and Implementation**

- ❑ Strengthen communication and coordinate participation among and within public agencies, citizens, non-profit organizations, business, and industry to gain a vested interest in implementation.
- ❑ Encourage leadership within public and private sector organizations to prioritize and implement local, county, and regional hazard mitigation actions.

#### **Emergency Services**

- ❑ Establish policy to ensure mitigation projects for critical facilities, services, and infrastructure.
- ❑ Strengthen emergency operations by increasing collaboration and coordination among public agencies, non-profit organizations, business, and industry.
- ❑ Coordinate and integrate wildfire mitigation activities, where appropriate, with emergency operations plans and procedures.

#### **Hazard, Vulnerability, and Risk Assessment**

Based on the analysis conducted as part of the mitigation planning effort the largest wildfire risks within the wildland/urban interface areas in Custer County is in the SNRA/private subdivision areas. The largest threat to life may well be the recreation sites such as Red Fish Lake, but certainly the highest property loss would occur within the privately owned subdivisions where loss of life could also be significant. Another serious risk area is the Riparian Zone below the Mackay Reservoir along the Big Lost River. The conditions within this area are not as well managed as the SNRA's Red Tree treatment areas. The Federal Government does not have ultimate responsibility for the treatment program and so the County and homeowners may well have to face this risk alone.

#### **Five Year Action Plan**

The following **specific implementing and ongoing actions** comprise the *Custer County Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Fire Year Plan*. Additional short and long term implementing actions have been categorized in Section 5 of the Plan into the following categories:

- ❑ Establish Partnerships
- ❑ Funding Needs
- ❑ Education and Training
- ❑ Data Collection

Subcommittees formed by the Custer County Fire Mitigation Advisory Committee will further examine actions identified in these categories and implemented them as funding and resources are made available.

The Plan below provides a succinct listing of activities that county agencies and private property owners will take over the next five years to reduce risk.

<b>Five Year Action Plan</b>	
<b>Existing Actions</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Revision of the Custer County Emergency Operations Plan.</li> <li>2. Installation of static water supply tanks in Stanley.</li> <li>3. SNRA Red Tree Reduction Project.</li> <li>4. Fuel Reduction Projects in the Iron Creek, Crooked Creek, Cow Camp, Basin Creek, Fisher Creek, and Buckhorn Subdivisions. Project includes thinning, removal and replanting of dead lodgepole pine.</li> <li>5. Rural Addressing of Custer County.</li> <li>6. Mechanical Fuel Reduction in the areas between the Yankee Fork Ranger District and the North East Stanley District of the Salmon-Challis National Forest.</li> <li>7. Procurement of new fire apparatus in South and North Custer Fire Districts.</li> </ol>	
<b>Short Term Actions</b>	
<b>Specific Implementing Actions Projects:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement Section 7 of the Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan through Plan adoption and Advisory Committee establishment.</li> <li>2. Implement re-vegetation programs in landslide areas affected by previous wildfires.</li> <li>3. Develop and disseminate maps showing the fire hazard to help in the education and preparedness of the community. Use the GIS layers developed as part of the Rural Addressing Project.</li> <li>4. Complete the Rural Addressing Project.</li> <li>5. Improve fire protection ratings in Stanley through the construction of a new fire station and improvements in water storage and distribution.</li> <li>6. Improve fire protection ratings in Mackay and the South Custer Fire District through the construction of a new fire station and improvements in the water storage and delivery infrastructure.</li> <li>7. Continue to assist homeowner associations to apply for grants for the purposes of reducing fuel loading and improvements in fire protection infrastructure.</li> <li>8. Conduct workshops for public and private sector organizations to raise awareness of mitigation activities and programs.</li> <li>9. Place the Custer County Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan on the County Web Site.</li> <li>10. Implement the SNRA Community Evacuation Plan.</li> <li>11. Develop Evacuation Plans for sites along the Custer Motorway Adventure Road including the historical sites along the Yankee Fork of the Salmon River.</li> </ol>	

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## **Long Term and Ongoing Actions**

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### **Specific Implementation Projects:**

1. Employ mechanical thinning and prescribe burning in Red Tree Areas.
2. Clear trimmings, trees, brush, and other debris completely from sites when performing routine maintenance and landscaping to reduce fire risk.
3. Expand Fire Districts to provide fire protection to residences within the County.

### **Ongoing Actions:**

1. Encourage single-family residences to have fire plans and practice evacuation routes.
2. Encourage fire inspections in residential areas by fire departments to increase awareness and establish relationships between homeowners and firefighters.
3. Continue the development of adult and child education programs and incorporate them into the public libraries, community service groups, the media, and other civic forums.
4. Continue to update and improve the SNRA Community Evacuation Plan.
5. Improve Fire District capabilities through an aggressive program focusing on resources acquisition, training, and coordination.

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Prior to implementation all mitigation actions will be analyzed for cost benefit using the Federal Emergency Management Agency's approach for wildfire mitigation strategies or projects. The implementing actions fall into two general categories: benefit/cost analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis. Conducting benefit/cost analysis for a mitigation activity will assist the decision makers within Custer County communities in determining whether a project is worth undertaking now, in order to avoid wildfire-related damages later. Cost-effectiveness analysis evaluates how best to spend a given amount of money to achieve a specific goal. Determining the economic feasibility of mitigating natural hazards provides decision makers with an understanding of the potential benefits and costs of an activity, as well as a basis upon which to compare alternative projects.

The Board of County Commissioners (BCC) will be responsible for adopting the Plan. The Interagency Planning Group, working with private property holders, will be responsible for coordinating implementation of Plan actions and undertaking the formal evaluation process. The Plan will be evaluated on an annual basis to determine the effectiveness of programs, and to reflect changes in land development or programs that may affect mitigation priorities.

Custer County is dedicated to involving the public directly in the continual review and updates of the Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan. Copies of the plan will be catalogued and kept at all of the public libraries in the county. The existence and location of these copies will be publicized annually, following each annual review of the plan, in the local area newspaper.